[We are informed by Mr. D. E. Reuben, I.C.S. (Retd.) that a pair shot by Nawab Chaudhri Nazirul Hassan and T. Atkins at Bakhtiarpur (Monghyr Dist.) on 11 March 1924 are exhibited in the Patna Museum.—EDS.]

## 11. A PINKHEADED DUCK [*RHODONESSA CARYOPHYLLACEA* (LATHAM)] AT LAST?

This is to inform you that, on 28 and 29 February 1960, I along with a friend Shri Grehawal, an Engineer in the Western Command, Simla, saw a solitary Pinkheaded Duck in a local tank in 'Kunihar State' situated about 40 miles south of Simla.

We tried to take a coloured photograph but, owing to the abundance of reeds and lack of a proper hide, we were unsuccessful in taking the picture. My Wildlife Guard told us that this drake was in the tank for the last two months or so along with Mallard and Common Teal.

SIMLA 4, K. L. MEHTA,
*March* 23, 1960. *Deputy Game Warden, Himachal Pradesh*

[It will be recalled that the last *definite* record of this species in a wild state goes back to 1935 when a trapped bird was brought to the late Mr. C. M. Inglis, in the Darbhanga Dist., Bihar.—EDS.]

## 12. BIRD NETTING AND THE WEATHER: SOME EXPERIENCES IN KUTCH, MARCH 1960

Clouds loomed ominously in the Kuar Bet sky as the first net was being installed. This was only a foretaste of the unpredictable spell of weather that confronted the Migration Study Team during the three weeks of the project. There were three dust-storms, one rainfall, and on three successive nights the thermometer recorded 40°, 42°, and 52° F. respectively.

How and to what extent did this abnormal weather affect the flow of migration? The answer is difficult, but a look at the collection statistics vis-á-vis the weather-chart is suggestive.

Below, the daily collection of three migratory species, namely Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca blythi*), Orphean Warbler (*Sylvia hortensis*), and Rosy Pastor (*Pastor roseus*) are plotted on a graph with dates on the other axis. Readings of temperature (maximum and minimum) and relative humidity are also plotted likewise.

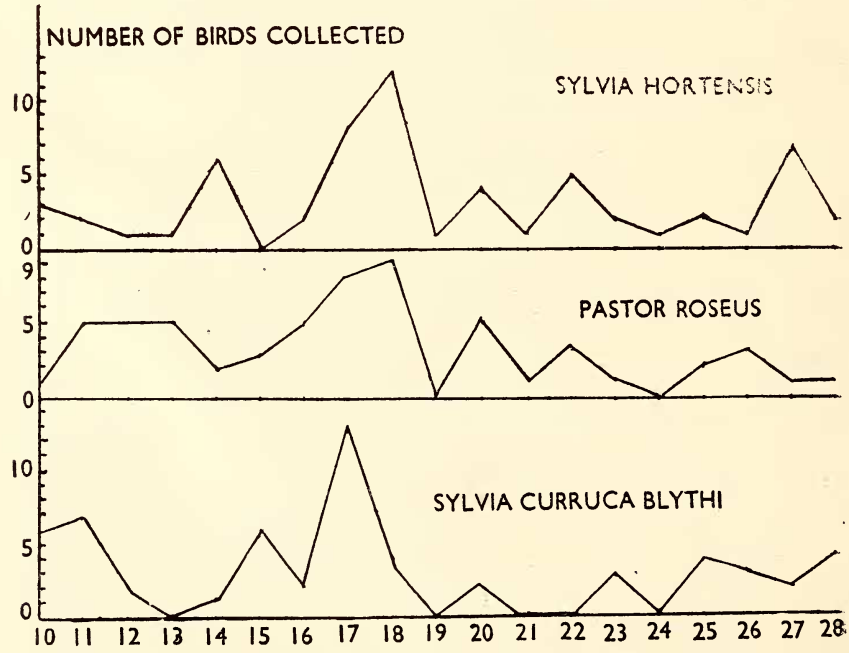
The collection period can be divided into two parts based on weather conditions:

1. *From the 10th to the 18th of March.* During this period the bird curves are on the ascendant. The Whitethroat curve reaches a peak on the 17th (13 birds). A day later the maximum numbers of Rosy Pastors and Orphean Warblers are trapped (9 and 12 respectively). The average temperature readings for this period are maximum 88.8 and minimum 66.6 Fahrenheit. The average relative humidity reads 64.5%. The minimum temperature is never below 60° F.

Two days stand out for record collection. They are: (1) 17-3-60 Max. 80°, Min. 68°, R.H. 64.5%. Number of birds collected 109. (2) 18-3-60 Max. 87°, Min. 66°, R.H. 49%. Number of birds 106.

During these 9 days 42 Whitethroats (70% of total collection of this species), 35 Orphean Warblers (57.3%) and 43 Rosy Pastors (71.4%) are recorded. This period also accounts for 69% of the total collection made during the entire project.

2. *From the 19th to the 28th of March.* The first day shows a marked fall in collection (21 birds) due to high winds that had sprung up in the night. There are temporary revivals on 20th and 22nd, after which the bird curves decline again following freakish weather.



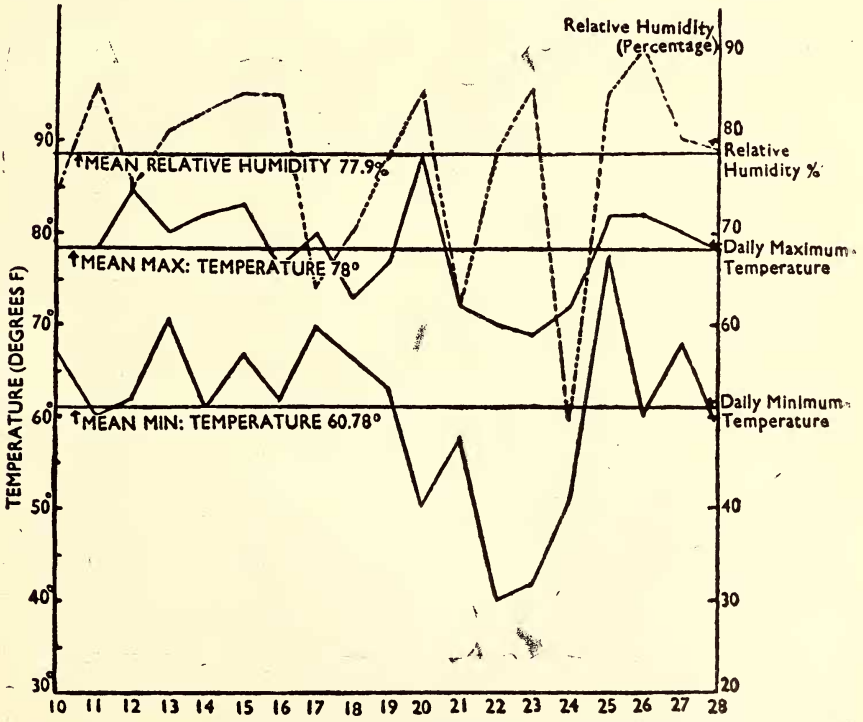

Graph showing the collection of three migratory species, Orphean Warbler, Rosy Pastor, and Lesser Whitethroat, at Kuar Bet, Kutch, 10-28 March 1960.

The weather chart shows big fluctuations from average readings during this period. The record shows:

| Date | Max. Temp. | Min. Temp. | R.H.% | No. of birds collected |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19.3.1960 | 77 | 63 | 79 | 21 |
| 20.3.1960 | 88 | 50 | 86 | 55 |
| 21.3.1960 | 72 | 58 | 63 | 18 |
| 22.3.1960 | 70 | 40 | 79 | 60 |
| 23.3.1960 | 69 | 42 | 86 | 39 |

The only exception is the capture of 7 Orphean Warblers on the 27th. In the course of these 10 days 18 Whitethroats, 26 Orphean Warblers, and 17 Rosy Pastors are recorded.

Another significant factor in the capture of birds was the flowering of *Capparis aphylla*. In the first half of the spring migration project these richly coloured and nectar-laden flowers were in full bloom, presenting a sure attraction for migrant species like Rosy Pastor and many of the warblers. Nets were erected between adjacent bushes—very often two nets were placed at an angle—so that the birds got entangled while crossing from one bush to another. This plan




Graph showing the record of air temperature at Kuar Bet, Kutch, 10 to 28 March 1960.

fetched handsome results when the flowers were in full bloom (10th to 19th of March). But once they started withering (from the 19th onward) the number of birds caught in these nets began to fall steeply.

## Recapture of Banded Birds

Out of a total of three hundred and twenty migrant birds ringed in the course of the present migration study 31 were recaptured on Kuar Bet between 10-3-60 and 28-3-60.

A Bluethroat (*Erithacus svecica*), banded on the 15th of March, was recaptured on the 28th. This is the longest period of stay of a migrant bird on the present record and suggests that the bird had probably overwintered here and was not on the move. Similarly, a Thickbilled Warbler (*Phragamaticola aëdon*), banded on 10-3-60, and the only one of its kind to be ringed, was caught again on the 22nd.

The following are particulars of some of the other migrants recaptured:

| Ring No. | Name of Bird | Date of ringing | Date of recapture |
|---|---|---|---|
| A1652 | *Acrocephalus stentoreus* | 11.3.60 | 23.3.60 |
| A1826 | *Acrocephalus stentoreus* | 15.3.60 | 18.3.60 |
| A1838 | *Acrocephalus stentoreus* | 15.3.60 | 18.3.60 |
| A1810 | *Acrocephalus dumetorum* | 15.3.60 | 22.3.60 |
| A1808 | *Acrocephalus dumetorum* | 15.3.60 | 20.3.60 |
| A1815 | *Acrocephalus dumetorum* | 15.3.60 | 16.3.60 |
| A1763 | *Sylvia hortensis* | 13.3.60 | 23.3.60 |
| A1981 | *Sylvia hortensis* | 17.3.60 | 25.3.60 |
| A1657 | *Sylvia curruca blythi* | 11.3.60 | 19.3.60 |
| A1901 | *Sylvia curruca blythi* | 16.3.60 | 25.3.60 |
| A1619 | *Sylvia curruca blythi* | 10.3.60 | 15.3.60 |
| A1929 | *Sylvia curruca blythi* | 17.3.60 | 18.3.60 |
| A1934 | *Sylvia curruca blythi* | 17.3.60 | 18.3.60 |
| A2153 | *Hippolais caligata rama* | 22.3.60 | 28.3.60 |
| A1664 | *Hippolais caligata rama* | 11.3.60 | 12.3.60 |
| B 599 | *Pastor roseus* | 13.3.60 | 15.3.60 |
| A1902 | *Phoenicurus ochruros* | 16.3.60 | 27.3.60 |
| A1977 | *Phoenicurus ochruros* | 17.3.60 | 20.3.60 |
| A1958 | *Phoenicurus ochruros* | 17.3.60 | 18.3.60 |
| A1841 | *Erithacus svecica* | 15.3.60 | 28.3.60 |
| A1706 | *Erithacus svecica* | 12.3.60 | 15.3.60 |
| A1770 | *Muscicapa parva* | 14.3.60 | 23.3.60 |
| A1833 | *Muscicapa parva* | 15.3.60 | 18.3.60 |
| AB190 | *Upupa epops* | 18.3.60 | 26.3.60 |
| A1724 | *Jynx torquilla* | 13.3.60 | 20.3.60 |
| A1753 | *Jynx torquilla* | 13.3.60 | 19.3.60 |
| AB194 | *Jynx torquilla* | 18.3.60 | 22.3.60 |
| A1799 | *Jynx torquilla* | 14.3.60 | 16.3.60 |
| AB044 | *Jynx torquilla* | 11.3.60 | 12.3.60 |

A House Sparrow, ringed on Kuar Bet on the 18th, was recaptured on the 25th at Vad vāli vai near Kotda. This involved a straight line

distance of about four miles across a bare arm of the Rann, suggesting that the birds fly such long distances to forage.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
91, WALKESHWAR ROAD, DANIEL MATHEW
BOMBAY 6,
*April* 15, 1960.

## 13. NOTES ON THE SPINYTAILED LIZARD, *UROMASTIX HARDWICKI* GRAY

In the latter half of February 1959 I had the opportunity of visiting the Banni on the borders of the Rann of Kutch. The 'Sanda' or Spinytailed Lizard (*Uromastix hardwicki* Gray) was common and there were large colonies on the outskirts of villages. The Banni is flooded during the rains and the villagers and the lizards form colonies on islands where alone they can survive.

They appeared to be very watchful and as our jeep approached would scuttle away into their holes, often 20 to 30 yards away. Their movements were too fast even to make an attempt at catching them by placing one's feet on their holes as is said to be done by boys in the Salt Ranges (Hora, *Rec. Ind. Mus.* **25**: 369-376).

At Dhorda we stopped for lunch and met a local inhabitant who offered to secure some. We went out to shoot spotted sandgrouse and when we came back after two hours, he had a bag full of lizards. When placed on the ground, however, they refused to run and a closer examination showed that they all had their backbones broken just behind the neck; we were informed that they would live for over a week and require no attention! These were put into spirit and we went out again to catch some more.

In the heat of the afternoon most of them had entered their holes but the method of their capture was very simple. The hunter was armed with two hard sticks, one about three-quarters inch diameter and four feet long and the other a little thicker, half its length, and pointed at one end. Having examined the entrance from which he could tell if the animal was within or not, he would quickly push in the longer stick as far as it would go, wedging the lizard against the wall. Then squatting near the hole and holding the big stick down with his toes, he used the shorter stick, as a pick-axe holding it between both his hands. Between 12 inches and 18 inches he would reach the tunnel and then grab the animal with his bare hands. It